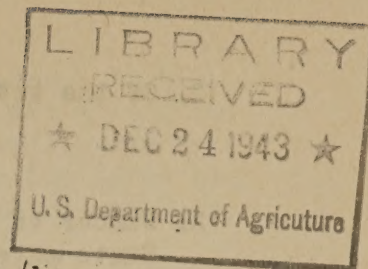


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United States Department of Agriculture
EXTENSION SERVICE
Washington 25, D. C.



OUR FARM LABOR RECORD AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY /1

INTRODUCTION

A year ago it was my privilege to report to this group on the progress made during the year 1942 in building a direct contact system of neighborhood leaders to insure that information on agriculture's wartime programs would reach effectively every one of the 6 million farm families of the Nation. No one could foresee at that time that within a few months the cooperative agricultural Extension Service of the Land-Grant Colleges and the Department of Agriculture would be assigned the emergency task of supplying farmers with the labor required to meet wartime food-production goals. I welcome the opportunity this meeting affords to report on the manner in which the State extension services have met the challenge presented by Public Law 45, 78th Congress, approved by the President on April 29, 1943.

Although some advance planning was possible prior to the final passage of the 1943 farm labor supply bill, there were so many uncertainties as to final assignment of responsibilities, that the story of progress and accomplishment here presented covers essentially a span of but 6 months.

American farms in 1943 have produced 5 percent more food than in the all-time record year of 1942, and 32 percent more food than the average of the 1935-9 period. This has been done with a numerically smaller farm labor force, composed of a substantial corps of experienced operators and hired hands augmented by relatively large numbers of old men, women, and immature youth. The 1943 harvest season is so well advanced that the following statement can safely be made at this time: No substantial loss of food has occurred during the year because of a shortage of harvest labor.

STATISTICAL SUMMARY

Before proceeding with an analysis of the farm labor program of the Extension Service, a few statistics may help to give us a picture of the magnitude of the activities involved in the extension farm labor program.

1. Number of placements of workers on farms during the 5 months ending September 30 (including placements made by U. S. Employment Service under contract with the Extension Service):

Seasonal.....	2,585,681
Year-round.....	120,671
Grand total....	2,706,352

/1 Presented to the Extension Section, Land-Grant College Association, Chicago, Ill., October 26, 1943, by Meredith C. Wilson, Deputy Director of Extension, In Charge, Farm Labor Program.

2. Of the total number of placements - 57 percent were men
19 percent were women
24 percent were youth.
3. Number of workers transported at expense of
State extension services 21,942
4. Number of workers for whom State extension
services provided, or assisted in providing,
housing 54,088
5. Number of county and local farm-placement
offices operated (including those contracted
for with the U. S. Employment Service) 6,150
6. Special farm labor personnel employed, the
majority of whom were on a temporary basis 5,870
7. Counties with functioning farm labor advisory
committees 2,900

PROVISIONS OF PUBLIC LAW 45

As conceived by Public Law 45, the over-all farm labor program has two distinct parts which, for brevity, may be labeled (1) intrastate, and (2) interstate and foreign. Responsibility for the intrastate aspects of farm labor, including the placement of interstate and foreign labor, rests with the State extension services with general supervisory powers vested in the War Food Administrator. One-half of the funds appropriated, or \$13,050,000, was made available for apportionment among the States on the basis of need.

The War Food Administrator was given responsibility for the recruitment, transportation, and housing of interstate and foreign workers; another \$13,050,000 being available for these purposes.

Two limitations on the use of the farm labor funds should be mentioned:

1. Funds shall not be used for the construction of farm labor housing.
2. Funds shall not be used for recruitment and transportation of agricultural workers from one county to another without prior written consent of the county agent.

CONTRACTS WITH U. S. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Public Law 45 made it permissible for the State extension service to contract with the U. S. Employment Service to perform for the Extension Service such farm labor services as might be agreed upon. Twenty-nine of the State extension services entered into such contracts. In only 11 States did the amount of the contract exceed \$30,000. The contractual relationship between the State extension service and the State office of the U. S. Employment Service has been quite satisfactory in a few States,

reasonably satisfactory in many, and unsatisfactory in some. It is improbable that more than one-third of the 29 States contracting for the services of certain USES offices and personnel in 1943 will enter into such contractual relations in 1944, assuming that Public Law 45 is extended without change of wording with respect to contracting with other agencies.

PHILOSOPHY OF PUBLIC LAW 45

In enacting the 1943 Farm Labor Supply Bill, Congress indicated in definite terms that major responsibility for supplying farmers with labor should be placed upon the States, with the power of the Federal Government available to assist with agricultural labor involving interstate or international movement. Emphasis was placed on self-help on the part of neighborhoods, communities, counties, and States. When the complete mobilization of all the sources of farm labor within the community does not provide sufficient supplemental labor to meet farm needs, then the county extension service supplies labor made available through a complete mobilization of the labor resources of the county. Labor needs of deficit counties are supplied by the State extension service, which utilizes labor drawn from nondeficit counties of the State, including nonfarm youth and women from cities. When a State is unable to care for the total labor needs of farmers, the Office of Labor, War Food Administration, is called upon to transport workers from other States where agriculture may be in slack season, or to supply workers imported from other countries. Where conditions are suitable, war prisoners may provide a means of increasing the farm labor supply. If an emergency arises, soldiers and sailors on passes may supply labor for a short period. In an extreme emergency, organized troop units may be provided by the Army to prevent food-harvest losses.

LOCAL MOBILIZATION

A splendid job was done in most States and counties in arousing nonfarm people of villages and cities to the need for additional farm workers to insure adequate agricultural production. A national publicity campaign publicizing the U. S. Crop Corps, received wide and generous support from newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and similar media. Defense Councils, Employment Service offices, civic groups, schools, industrial groups, churches, and voluntary organizations of every description have all assisted in untold ways. Previously unrealized manpower strength has saved the crop in literally thousands of localities scattered throughout every part of the Nation. Surveys of farm labor requirements and supply, made by the Extension Service neighborhood leader system, have been invaluable in matching farm labor needs and supplies on community and county levels. The large figures on farm labor placements mentioned earlier are impressive, but would be dwarfed were it possible to express statistically the accomplishments flowing from the efforts of volunteer leaders working under extension stimuli. Through the neighborhood leader system, built in 1942 to handle just such a war-time assignment, local farm labor problems were frequently solved without being brought to the attention of extension farm labor personnel.

A recent North Carolina survey of 331 neighborhood leaders covering 4,666 white and Negro farms indicates that 2/3 of the farms had labor problems in 1943 and that 3/4 of those farms solved their labor problems by the exchange of labor and machinery. If this sample may be considered representative of the State, the total amount of labor exchanged by North Carolina farmers during 1943 amounted to 4,900,000 man days. That is 196,000 months of 25 working days each. Exchanging work is not new in farm neighborhoods. It is not known how much labor has been "swapped" by North Carolina farmers in previous years. It is reasonably safe to assume that this practice was greatly increased in 1943 due to the efforts of neighborhood leaders.

VICTORY FARM VOLUNTEERS

Nonfarm youth comprised one of the most important sources of inexperienced farm labor available in 1943. The youth section of the U. S. Crop Corps is called Victory Farm Volunteers, and though farm youth are eligible for membership in the VFV, the program is designed primarily to utilize urban youth under 18 years of age. Developed in cooperation with the United States Office of Education and the public schools, the VFV program was patterned quite largely after the Volunteer Land Corps experiment of 1942, sponsored by Miss Dorothy Thompson, and so forcefully described by her to this group a year ago.

More than 400,000 youth were placed in farm jobs by the Extension Service during the current season. It is estimated that an equal number found their own jobs due to widespread appeals urging youth to work on farms. Cooperation of the schools has been excellent, particularly in recruiting, selection, and training. Teachers have made excellent farm labor assistants and camp supervisors for VFV groups. School buildings have been utilized for housing youth workers. Youth-serving agencies, such as the Boy Scouts, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., Youth Division of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and various Jewish agencies, including B'nai B'rith, have lent a helping hand, particularly in organizing and supervising camps for youth workers.

Reports from all over the country recite the contribution inexperienced youth have made to war food production. Here are a few examples of VFV accomplishments:

- Shocked 110,000 acres grain (Nebraska).
- Thinned, hoed, and harvested 18,000 acres sugar beets (Utah).
- Picked 620,000 bales of cotton (Mississippi).
- Detasseled 7,160 acres of hybrid corn (Indiana).
- Picked 90,000 bushels of tomatoes (Louisiana).
- Harvested 3,000,000 bushels of potatoes (Maine).
- Detasseled 44,000 acres of hybrid corn (Iowa).
- Picked 150,000 tons fresh grapes (California).

And so the reports continue piling up - evidence of the magnitude of youth's part in making the 1943 food production record possible.

WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

Women, as well as youth, have made an outstanding contribution to food production in 1943. During the 5 months ending September 30, more than 200,000 women have been placed in agriculture through the farm labor program of the Extension Service. This number is constantly increasing. The Women's Land Army Division of the U. S. Crop Corps comprises college girls, teachers, store clerks, stenographers, other business and professional women, and homemakers, who have done such seasonal jobs as harvest beans, tomatoes, lettuce, and other vegetables; and have cared for poultry; operated milking machines; driven trucks and tractors; detasseled corn; shocked wheat; picked cotton and potatoes; ^{and} picked, graded, and packed fruit. Most of these women were inexperienced in farm work and have made good.

Farm women and girls who perform a substantial amount of farm work are eligible for membership in the Women's Land Army, but the figure previously cited does not include farm wives and daughters who have put in longer hours than ever before at field tasks and chores, in many instances taking over the management of the farm in the absence of husbands and brothers.

A few thousand year-round women workers have been placed on farms, mainly for dairy and poultry work. The earlier reluctance of farmers and farmers' wives to the employment of women as regular hired hands is dwindling rapidly. There is mounting evidence that farmers are more liberal in their attitudes toward the employment of women in agriculture than are extension leaders and agents. It is now a question of developing recruitment methods to supply the women for whom year-round farm jobs are readily available.

EFFICIENT UTILIZATION OF LABOR

Any sound program of supplying labor to farmers for wartime production must be squarely established on a foundation of effective use of the labor already on farms, and which may be made available to farmers. Efficient use of labor has always been profitable farm management. In view of wartime manpower demands, it becomes almost criminal not to use the labor at hand to the best possible advantage. Agriculture must come to the overall manpower table with clean hands.

This aspect of the farm labor program is a "natural" for the Extension Service since it involves the educational techniques with which extension workers have had years of practical experience. Specialists in farm and home management and in the other agricultural and home economics subject-matter fields have generally applied themselves to devising ways and means of saving labor on the farm and in the farm home through more widespread use of time and energy saving devices, the elimination of unnecessary practices, care and repair of machinery, and untold numbers of similar approaches. How to do the job with less labor has become a definite part of every extension subject-matter project and is permeating all teaching media. We are discovering that job methods training and job instruction training, so successful in war industries, have a real place in wartime agriculture. Proper training of new agricultural workers by farmers saves time, promotes safety, and improves relationship between workers and employers. All of which adds up to an increased supply of labor and greater production. The organization of groups of farmers to pool their

labor and machinery resources as a means of increasing their total production is, of course, closely related to use of volunteer local leadership. The time and motion studies made possible by a grant from the General Education Board and being directed by Dr. E. C. Young of Purdue are opening new vistas and providing a scientific basis for increasing the output of workers in agriculture. The State experiment stations are alive to the spirit of the times and are beginning to provide research information on farm labor for Extension's use in the field.

INTERSTATE AND FOREIGN LABOR

In our zeal to set forth the accomplishments of the intrastate part of the farm labor program, made the responsibility of the cooperative Extension Service by Public Law 45, we must not overlook the very real contribution of the complementary half of the total farm labor supply program, namely, the interstate and foreign labor handled directly by the Office of Labor, War Food Administration. Because of the expense involved in transporting and housing interstate and foreign workers, this part of the program is, of necessity, much more costly than the part handled by Extension. It takes money to move thousands of workers long distances; provide food, shelter, and medical attention; and keep the records made necessary by the international agreements.

A seasoned, mobile task force of agricultural workers, if properly utilized, is of inestimable value in supplementing local labor resources, so as to accomplish maximum production.

Interstate domestic labor - In 14 States, the State extension services have recruited approximately 10,000 workers who were transported by the Office of Labor to the States of need. Some of the largest of these movements have been (1) from Arkansas and Oklahoma to Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota to harvest small grains; (2) from West Virginia, Kentucky, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts to Maine for the potato harvest; ^{and} (3) from Tennessee to Idaho for potatoes. Two other large interstate movements in the making are, (1) from the middle Mississippi Valley States to Arizona for long-staple cotton, and (2) from the southeastern States to Florida for citrus and winter vegetables. Fair play between States and the prompt return of workers to the State of origin are essential to increasing the volume of interstate movements which benefit the workers through increased income and help to solve labor bottlenecks in other farming areas.

Foreign labor -Under international agreements, the Office of Labor has imported approximately 50,000 Mexican Nationals, 9,000 Jamaicans, and 4,500 Bahamians to work on farms in this country.

Between February 15 and September 30, 1943, the War Food Administration moved 79,500 workers. During the year, the Office of Labor has operated 151 farm labor supply centers.

COOPERATION OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT

The story of the 1943 farm labor program would be incomplete without reference to the excellent cooperation received on all occasions from the War Department in Washington, the Service Commands, and the Army posts. The loan of army equipment has been an important factor in the housing of

both domestic and foreign workers. Members of the armed services on passes not to exceed 3 days have contributed thousands of man days of labor in connection with the harvesting of perishable vegetables and fruits. Substantial numbers of war prisoners have been made available to harvest peanuts, cotton, rice, sugarcane, and potatoes.

Organized troop units have been assigned by the War Department to meet grave emergencies which threatened the loss of large amounts of essential food in five States.

STATE EXTENSION EXPENDITURES FOR FARM LABOR

Public Law 45 provides that not less than \$9,000,000 and not more than \$13,050,000 shall be apportioned to the States on the basis of need. To date, checks totaling \$8,058,000 have been sent the States.

As of September 30, State extension service expenditures were \$3,110,312

Estimated funds required to December 31, 1943 ... 2,591,767

Estimated total expenditures of States for 1943 farm labor program 5,702,079

Estimated balance at end of year of farm labor funds allotted to States 2,355,911

Farm labor funds available to States but not allotted 4,992,000

Total estimated unexpended balance of appropriation under Public Law 45 on December 31, 1943 \$7,347,911

Delay in final enactment of the farm labor supply bill was, of course, partially responsible for the low expenditures of farm labor funds by State extension services. It is estimated that at least \$500,000 of regular extension funds were used for farm labor work, which makes the cost of the Extension farm labor program appear somewhat lower than it actually is.

The State extension services have certainly proved that they can be trusted not to spend money, though available, unless it is required to do the job. It is to be hoped that this economy record will be an asset and not a liability in obtaining an adequate appropriation for the 1944 farm labor program. The uncertainties of farm labor demand and supply are such that it is difficult to estimate accurately expenditures for farm labor 10 to 15 months in advance. The importance of agricultural production to the war effort makes it extremely important that sufficient funds be available to meet any reasonable farm labor emergency.

SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK FOR 1944

There is danger that a review of the 1943 successes of the cooperative Extension Service in

Stimulating farm families to solve their farm labor problems close at home;

Mobilizing local resources to meet local farm labor needs,

Organizing and operating a Victory Farm Volunteers program in cooperation with the schools,

Initiating and developing a Women's Land Army movement of impressive size,

Handling the intrastate and local aspects of labor transported from other States or imported from foreign lands,

Arranging for war-prisoner labor,

Seeing to it, in an extreme emergency, that troops were utilized to prevent food loss, and

Accomplishing all the preceding for one-half the anticipated cost may cause a relaxation of effort at a time when we should be getting ready for what promises to be a much more difficult situation in 1944.

More farm labor will be required to meet production goals next year - 50,000 year-round and 300,000 seasonal workers.

The competition by the armed services, industry, and agriculture for the available total manpower will unquestionably become keener and keener.

Effective use of the labor on farms and available to agriculture must be stressed, and stressed hard.

Local mobilization should be stepped up in all localities where anything less than 100 percent use of local sources of farm labor took place in 1943.

One of the toughest farm labor problems, that of obtaining year-round help for dairy, poultry, and general livestock farms, has not received adequate attention to date.

Nonfarm youth is perhaps the most promising source of large numbers of summer season farm workers. The VFV program, unquestionably, can be greatly expanded and improved.

Women have demonstrated their ability to do all kinds of farm jobs, including year-round work. The WLA should be able to recruit, train, and place thousands of women on dairy, poultry, and general livestock farms as farm hands for the duration.

Studies of farm labor supplies and needs are essential in locating experienced farm workers who can be transported during slack periods to other parts of the State and to other States to care for short-period farm labor peaks.

The months just ahead offer opportunity for orderly planning and for the training of new farm labor personnel.

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The better the State extension services can do the intrastate farm labor job in 1944, the less the need for the transporting of interstate and foreign workers long distances at large expense.

It is easy to call upon the Army to help out, but the production of food is a civilian job. We must keep situations requiring the use of troops in agriculture from developing.

It has been a pleasure to bring you this report on the 1943 farm labor program of the cooperative Extension Service. It has been a strenuous but satisfying effort. I appreciate the wholehearted support and time you State directors of extension have personally given to the farm labor sector of the extension battle line. You have made the 1943 victory possible.

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